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NARRATOR Mr. Walter Hansen

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Hansen's home-Solvang

DATE Oct. 15, 1980

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Interview with Walter Leeland Hanson, Interview 1  
Date of Interview: 15 Oct. 1980; Solvang, California  
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz  
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz  
Begin Tape 1. Side 1

PL: I am interviewing Mr. Walter Hanson of Fredensborg Canyon Road, Solvang, California who was Editor of the Santa Ynez Valley News from 1927 to 1945. With him is his daughter Audrey Mae Farmer. Mr. Hanson, where did your parents come from?

Mr. H.: From Norway as was my Grandparents and my Father, Mother was born in America.

PL: Where did they settle when they came?

Mr. H.: There was a whole group that came over on the same boat and they stayed on the boat until it docked and they had tickets to go to Fillmore County, Minnesota, north of Iowa. I think there were thirty or forty in the group. They all homesteaded in Fillmore County, built their own cabins, barns etc., from the timber on the land.

PL: Did they have an agreement before they started for America so that they knew where they were to go?

Mr. H. They only had the information from the government that they knew the land was open for homesteading. They all homesteaded together but they are all gone now. All my folks are gone. When the kids got old enough to be married they moved to North Dakota, near Castleton in the west. They homesteaded on that land and most of them stayed there 40-50 years ago. The off-spring of that outfit is where I come in, third generation.

PL: What year was your Father born?

Mr. H. I don't know but his name was Peter M. Hanson. He was the child of the original homesteader and went to North Dakota. Some homesteaded and some went into business. My Father was in the implement and hardware business and farmed on the side. When I was 11 or 12 years old I was driving a four horse team plowing the land.

PL: How many children in the family?

Mr. H.: I am the oldest, the only boy with five sisters, two are

still living, one in North Dakota, and one in Montana. I started in the printing trade in Nome, North Dakota and got so I knew all the cases and could set type. Then I worked different places, Dad had the fam implement store and I worked part of the time there, but I was stuck on printing. I got a job at a print show and then the original publisher bought a paper so I went down there and worked for him for several years. I was married about 1915 and stayed there and bought a newspaper, the Hidrock Journal. So we ran it along for awhile but we could see the deterioration of the town, on account of the state flooding our lake, which took up alot of the farm land. That town started to go down hill and at one point many moved to Oregonville. We decided to sell out, there were people interested in the paper so we sold part of the plant and shipped the part we wanted to keep to Montana where we started another newspaper. The Harlowtown Times, and it is still running, I sold out in 1918.

I went into the Army, enlisted and served. They sent me to Bosman to the government school to study for the Air Corps. We studied how to send messages, telegraph and telephone all that stuff. Then we were sent to Camp Mead, Long Island, this was around 1917. They got ready to ship me overseas we had boarded the shope when the Armistice was signed and they turned the boat around.

PL: What was your wife doing at this time?

Mr. H.: She was in Montana and after the war they elected me to be County Clerk and Recorder and I made her Chief Deputy, as we knew all about books and bookkeeping. We stayed there about 6 years. I had the paper, the Harlowtown Times there too.

PL: At that time how many pages would the paper put out?

Mr. H.: It ran from 4 to 10 pages, a Weekly and we published other papers for smaller towns, 15, 20 miles away that wanted a paper so we did that too. We were in the publishing business.

PL: How did you hear about the Santa Ynez Valley?

Mr. H.: We did not know anything about this place but we were look-

ing for a place to locate as I had sold part of the paper to my partner, I had to get out of there, I had hay fever so bad! The doctor told me to move to a higher altitude, 6,000 ft. We packed all our stuff in the car and headed west. Seattle was looking for another newspaper and we had alot of relatives in Washington State, a bunch of Hansons went to Washington so we also followed the coast down thruough this country and went to Los Angeles where we had some other friends and I got a job on the Banning Recond and then they got me to put out the Palm Springs Sun. The first paper in Palm Springs that was about 1927.

PL: Did the climate agree with you there?

Mr. H.: Yes, I was fine. I was anxious to get something of my own, as I was working for a salery, so we came north, as we heard of this paper in Solvang, that was in 1927, and we have been here ever since. I bought the paper from Mr. Powell, he had it about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years.

PL: Why did Mr. Powell sell to you?

Mr. H.: Liquor, and he had a family of four boys. She did not want to move but they were forced to get out. Later he was in Los Angeles and was killed by a streetcar and that was the end of that. I carried on from there. There were about 4 pages. I was in the newspaper business for 20 years before I bought the Santa Ynez Valley News. We sold out here in 1944 to Kintzel / Jorgensen, and then I was in the real estate business too on the side. I opened 4 real estate offices in the valley, I went into that.

PL: Was it hard work putting out a paper?

Mr. H.: Quite a bit of work. The publisher usually owned the paper and the editor edits the editorial column. I was publisher and editor for 28 years.

PL: Can you tell me any interesting stories about putting out the paper?

Mr. H.: I remember one time we had the paper to go when a storm knocked out the electricity, so we printed from a hand press and ran it off that way and were lucky, we never missed a issue. At that time there were only 300 people in Solvang, 100 in Santa Ynez and maybe 60 in Buellton and now look at it!

We had many visitors from the county and state. And we

elected some State Senators from our community.

PL: Did you know Mr. Tom Stork?

Mr. H.: Oh yes, when we were in the real estate business he wanted to see some of the land we had listed so he and his wife came out. There was a piece of land behind the Post Office all the way to the river for 25, 000 dollars, now its worth millions and he kicked himself for not buying it. He was a big heavy fellow and about 6 feet. He was making money and he wanted to invest his money. He bought land in Goleta Valley and property north of Santa Barbara but I don't think he bought any in the Valley, not from me.

We had four offices, 2 in Solvang, 1 in Santa Ynez, Tom Coleman was in Los Olivos, and Axel Jorgensen in Buellton. We were selling real estate right and left, this was in the 1940's We advertized in the L.A. papers ,San Francisco and Santa Barbara.

PL: Do you remember Marcus Nielsen?

Mr. H.: Oh sure, when I came to Solvang, he came over to see me and he owned the building where the paper was. He invited us for Sunday Dinner and that was how we got in with the Danes because we were slso Norwegian. He was enterprizing and helped alot of people. Loaned them money and bought land for them. He had land all around the Valley after he turned the store over to the kids. Most of the land was on the flat on that side of the river. He owned the building where the newspaper office was, and I bought that from him.

PL: When did the town change the name of the street, Main to Copenhagen?

Mr. H.: About 1948 or 9. To make it more Danish. After World War II the Passke boys inherited their Father's funeral and furniture store and they wanted to get into a new building so they built the new building at the head of the street Copenhagen and Alisal. Ener Johnson built the first store that looked Danish , then the Passke's built theres. Everyone was intrigued with the idea of starting a Danish community. Their Fathers had thought of the idea, not the way it has grown, but more of a little Danish community but it mushroomed.

PL: Where was your daughter born?

Mr. H.: In Montana and just a little girl when we came here. She helped us at the newspaper office as well as her Mother.

PL: What about Phil Lockwood?

Mr. H.: I had to go to the hospital in Tucson, sinus trouble so Phil took over and helped at the paper. He had been a printers devil during his highschool days so he knew about putting out a paper, and so did Karl Jorgensen.

PL: What is a printer's devil?

Mr. H.: After the paper is printed and all the type is finished, the lead type has to be taken out and melted down to be used over again.

PL: Tell me about Mr. Anton Andersen?

Mr. H.: Oh, yes, he was quite aggressive. His brother had a store and pool hall in Solvang.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

PL: You started publishing the minutes of the Board of Supervisors?

Mr. H.: Yes, it was the first time anyone outside Santa Barbara had done this and Stork did not like it. There were more Republicans on the board and he was a Democrat. I was an all around printer, lots of job printing, letter heads, menus, etc. When I had the paper it ran 4 to 8 pages a week and now it is up to 30. You have to advertize to make the paper pay. We went to Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, and Lompoc for ads. I had to give up the paper because of my hearing, I was making too many mistakes.

My first wife was born in Minnesota, I met her in No. Dakota where I was learning the printer's trade and she was working for my uncle, as a bookkeeper. We went together for 4 or 5 years, and were married in 1915, Oct. 27th. She worked every day at the newspaper office and we lived several years in Solvang, then moved to Baseline in Ballard and them to Fredensberg

Canyon in 1945.

I was one of the members of the organizing committee for the first Danish Days.

PL: How do you feel about Solvang now?

Mr. H.: It is hard to believe it has grown so. Its the only place in the state that has this atmosphere.

The buildings, Harksen did not want the Danish architecture, so he moved the accounts out to another bank. Poor old Harksen. That location was at Main and First.

PL: Thank you Mr. Hanson for this interview.